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## THE NIGHT PRESS NOTES

US-Iran co-production 'The Night' is a Persian and English-language psychological horror-thriller starring Shahab Hosseini (Cannes Best Actor winner [2016] for Asghar Farhadi's Academy Award-winner 'The Salesman' and Berlin International Film Festival's Silver Bear for Best Actor winner [with the rest of the cast] [2011] for Asghar Farhadi's Academy Award-winner 'A Separation'). The feature debut of Iranian-American writer-director Kourosh Ahari, who previously directed the award-winning Tom Hanks-backed short film 'Generations', 'The Night' tells the story of an Iranian couple (Shahab Hosseini and Niousha Jafarian) and their one-year-old daughter who find themselves locked inside an old hotel—forced by foreign forces to face the secrets they've hidden from each other. How, and if, they check out depends on how carefully they question everything and anyone that comes across their path.

Shot on location in the US, 'The Night' recently received a license for theatrical release in Iran, making it the first US-produced film to do so since the Iran revolution, which Deadline called “a historic benchmark” <sup>1</sup>. 'The Night' world premiered at Santa Barbara International Film Festival in January to audience and critical acclaim, with critics saying it's a “remarkable evocation of Kubrickian horror” “Alex Garland levels of reality perversion” “a startling feature directorial debut” “mesmerizing psychological horror/thriller” “Hosseini is riveting” “explodes with creativity” among many other words of praise <sup>2</sup> and an added encore screening by popular demand and positive word-of-mouth.

'The Night' went into production in the US in 2018, at the onset of Trump's Iran sanctions imposition, employing an incredibly diverse cast and crew made up of predominantly Iranian immigrants who are legal citizens/green card holders, or US-born Iranian-Americans. All department heads leading the production, from production through post, are Iranian or of Iranian descent. In light of The Academy's new diversity standards for Academy Award Best Picture eligibility, 'The Night' not only meets, but exceeds the requirements of at least two of the four

standards (A for On-Screen Representation, Themes and Narratives and B for Creative Leadership), employing Iranians in leadership roles in all key creative positions above and below the line, including Iranian women, and employing Iranians in both lead acting roles, while being US-produced. In fact, Iranians are so underrepresented, they are combined with a number of other ethnic backgrounds in both AMPAS' classifications and the US Census as "Middle Eastern", despite Iran's cinema and cultural heritage being one of the most significant global cinema's historically.

Among the Iranian department heads are director of photography Maz Makhani (Emmy nominated '#Freerayshawn'), production designer Jennifer Dehghan ('The Squid and the Whale'), Academy Award nominated supervising sound editor Kami Asgar ('Apocalypto') and several others across the board.

Shahab Hosseini has created some of the most indelible character portrayals in Iranian cinema history, playing a significant role in putting Iranian cinema on the global map. He is widely regarded as one of Iran's most talented and prolific actors by Iranians and non-Iranians alike. 'The Night' marks Hosseini's debut performance in a US-based production.

In her first leading role in a feature film, newcomer Niousha Jafarian (HBO's 'Here and Now') stars opposite Shahab Hosseini, also critically-acclaimed for her performance. Rounding out the cast is notable character actor George Maguire ('Fight Club', 'The Pursuit of Happyness', 'The Game'), Michael Graham ('Once Upon a Time in Hollywood'), Elester Latham ('Air Force One'), Armin Mehr, Amir Ali Hosseini (Shahab Hosseini's son), Golbarg Khavari, Ali Kousheshi, Lily V.K., Gia Mora ('Baskets') and Leah Oganyan.

'The Night' is produced by Alex Bretow for Mammoth Pictures, Kouros Ahari for Mammoth Pictures, Jeffrey Allard ('The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' [2003 with Michael Bay]) for Indie Entertainment, Cheryl Staurulakis ('The Night Watchmen') for Orama Filmworks, Armin Amiri for Supernova8 Films and Mohammad Dormanesh. Academy Award and Golden Globe-winner Terry George ('Hotel Rwanda') is consulting producer. Film Independent Spirit Award-winner George Rush ('Sorry To Bother You'), Behnam Bebahani, Leo Staurulakis, Ryan Clarkson, David Spisak, Chris Johns, Derek Benham, Robert Spears, Charles Freiberg and P.K. Patel executive produce. 'The Night' is from production company Mammoth Pictures, in association with 7Skies Entertainment, Indie Entertainment, Orama Filmworks, Leveller Media and Supernova8 Films.

Following a screening at Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival just before COVID-related shutdowns began, English-speaking audience reactions were recorded as they left the theatre praising 'The Night' as "Bomb" "Fantastic" "Relentlessly captivating" "Terrifying" "Excellent" and "Enigmatic" among several other words of praise <sup>3</sup>.

Working with Ayat Film Company, 'The Night's distributor in Iran from the script stage, the director and production team took every measure to carefully ensure we could be licensed for theatrical release under Iran's regulations, while never sacrificing the director's vision, and making a film the team truly feels (and have found through festival screenings in the US) appeals to worldwide audience.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> Deadline,

<https://deadline.com/2020/07/kourosh-ahari-the-night-iran-license-theatrical-release-shahab-hosseini-1202985263/>

<sup>2</sup> The Night Official Website, <http://thenightfilm.com/press>

<sup>3</sup> The Night Official Website, <http://thenightfilm.com/testimonials>